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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces \$2.7 Million for River and Wetland Restoration and Climate Adaptation

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Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Department of Fish and Game

Division of Ecological Restoration

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BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today announced \$2.7 million in state and federal grant funds for ecological restoration projects in the towns of Bridgewater, Falmouth, Kingston, Littleton/Westford, Newbury, Plymouth, Wellfleet/Truro, and Yarmouth to support river and wetland habitat restoration and climate adaptation. These projects are also now designated as Priority Projects through the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), making the projects eligible for technical services, including data collection, engineering, design work, permitting, project management and grants.

"Dam removal, culvert replacement, and other nature-based approaches are a key part of our administration's approach to building resiliency preparing for climate change," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "We are proud to help communities complete on-the-ground projects that improve public safety and restore habitat for fish and wildlife."

"By partnering with federal agencies, municipalities, and conservation organizations, our administration is able to make greater and more effective investments in climate change adaptation," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "These grants will improve infrastructure and our environment, providing long-term benefits to our environment and people of Massachusetts."

The eight projects help local partners remove aging dams, restore salt marsh habitat, rejuvenate historic wetlands on retired cranberry bogs, restore streamflow, and replace undersized and failing culverts. Each project restores healthy habitat while also helping communities prevent storm damage, address aging infrastructure, and improve outdoor recreation. Currently, 53 [ecological restoration projects](https://eea/agencies/dfg/der/der-priority-projects-map.html) ([/eea/agencies/dfg/der/der-priority-projects-map.html](https://eea/agencies/dfg/der/der-priority-projects-map.html)) throughout the state are designated as Priority Projects.

"Priority Projects are a critical component of the Baker-Polito Administration's efforts to restore environmental habitat, improve climate resilience and water quality, and increase opportunities for outdoor recreation," **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Kathleen Theoharides**. "By working with federal partners, and local stakeholders, the administration will continue to make smart, targeted investments that protect critical

habitat and create and sustain jobs within the construction, engineering, and nursery industries.”

“Dam removal, salt marsh restoration, and culvert replacement projects expand and improve habitat conditions for a variety fish and wildlife,” **said Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Ronald Amidon.** “These projects also improve outdoor recreational opportunities including fishing, nature observation, and canoe and kayak use.”

The grants awarded by the Baker-Polito Administration include:

Coonamessett River Restoration, Falmouth

Award: Town of Falmouth - \$360,000 (Federal)

This grant supports construction to restore the Coonamessett River and replace a deteriorated road-stream crossing on a town-owned road in Falmouth. The Town of Falmouth, DER, conservation organizations, and state and federal agencies are working together to restore the lower Coonamessett River in Falmouth, Massachusetts. The Coonamessett River, one of the largest rivers on Cape Cod, once harbored a significant herring run and is a high-priority watershed for diadromous fish restoration. This grant will support the removal of the “Middle Dam” and installation of an additional pedestrian boardwalk/river crossing in its place, replace the failing culvert carrying John Parker Road over the Coonamessett River, and restore an additional 39 acres of former cranberry bogs to natural wetlands and improved access for river herring to 158 acres of spawning habitat. Construction will start in the summer of 2019. DER will be providing the Town \$360,000 awarded to DER from United States D.O.I. Fish and Wildlife Service Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief funding.

Foothills Preserve / West Beaver Dam Brook Restoration Project, Plymouth

Award: Town of Plymouth - \$75,000 (State)

This grant supports wetland restoration across 42 acres of retired cranberry farmland owned by the Town of Plymouth and 5 acres of downstream degraded floodplain owned by Mass Audubon as part of the Foothills Preserve and West Beaver Dam Brook

Restoration Project. A total of six small dams will be removed as part of the project to restore free flowing conditions along 1.27 miles of stream channel, and reconnect this sub-watershed to the ocean. Once complete, the site will be transformed into a mosaic of natural habitat types within protected public open space, including open water, marsh, fen, forested wetland, restored coastal stream, and sand plain grassland. Funding from DER will support the final design, permitting, and bid phases of the project. This grant leverages federal funding for project implementation totaling approximately \$1,400,000, secured from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Great Marsh Restoration Project, Essex, Ipswich, Newbury

Award: The Trustees of Reservations - \$50,000 (State)

This grant will support the effort of The Trustees of Reservations in partnership with the USFWS and DER to address the legacy impacts of agricultural and historic salt marsh ditching by expanding ditch remediation efforts across Essex and Ipswich where high marsh habitat is threatened by sea level rise. Grant funds will support design, permitting and establishment of long-term monitoring stations necessary to evaluate innovative restoration techniques and future marsh health. Funding will also complement previously awarded MassBays and UFSWS funds and may leverage future pending National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant funding.

Herring River Estuary Restoration Project, Wellfleet / Truro

Award: Friends of Herring River - \$500,000 (State)

This grant will restore tidal flow to approximately 6 miles of waterways and up to 1,000 acres of degraded salt marsh and estuarine habitats as part of the Herring River Estuary Restoration Project. The project will also improve Wellfleet Harbor water quality, enhance migratory fish access to hundreds of acres of spawning ponds, restore a significant area of shellfish habitat, and increase coastal resilience to the effects of climate change and sea level rise. Restoration will be achieved primarily through reconstruction of the main Chequessett Neck Road dike at the river mouth in Wellfleet and construction of two

secondary upstream dikes that will allow controlled, incremental restoration of tidal flow to the estuary while protecting low-lying roads and other structures from flooding.

Jones River Restoration Project/ Elm St. Dam Removal, Kingston

Award: Jones River Watershed Association - \$100,000 (SEP)

This grant will support the removal of a head-of-tide dam at Elm Street in Kingston, MA. The work at Elm Street will directly contribute to strengthening the resiliency of this coastal community to climate-related hazards by removing vulnerable infrastructure and concurrently restoring valuable riverine habitat. Restoration of riverine habitat through removal of the dam spillway will provide unrestricted fish passage for diadromous and native fish, and for some species, access to spawning and nursery habitats that have been blocked for almost 400 years. DER is providing \$100,000 toward construction with Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) funds.

Parkers River Tidal Restoration, Yarmouth

Award: Town of Yarmouth - \$ 1,600,000 (Federal)

This grant will support a large coastal wetland complex (153 acres of estuary, salt pond, and salt marsh), fish runs for river herring and American eel, and important nursery habitat for winter flounder. For nearly a decade, The Town of Yarmouth has been working with local, state, and federal partners to eliminate a severe tidal restriction on the Parkers River, by replacing a degraded and undersized state bridge on Route 28, a primary transportation corridor on Cape Cod. The project will consist of a 30-ft wide bridge span which will restore more natural tidal hydrology to the Parkers River estuary. The project will also eliminate a velocity barrier to migratory fish passage, improve water quality, and enhance protection from coastal storms and storm surges. DER is supporting this important infrastructure, habitat and coastal resiliency project through a project implementation sub-grant of \$1,600,000 in funding from U.S. D.O.I., Fish and Wildlife Service Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief funds.

Stony Brook Flow Restoration Project, Littleton and Westford

Award: Town of Littleton - \$11,000 (State)

This grant will support the improved streamflow in Stony Brook in Littleton and Westford, MA. Streamflow in the Brook is often lower than is normal and this project aims to improve flow through coordinated operation of existing impoundments to release water during low flow periods. This project will improve habitat quantity and quality for a variety of aquatic species, including fish and macroinvertebrates. DER will be providing the Town of Littleton \$11,000 towards the purchase of monitoring stations that record and transmit water level data to inform streamflow releases.

Town River Restoration Project / High St Dam Removal & Bridge Replacement, Bridgewater

Award: The Nature Conservancy - \$70,000 (\$25,000 Federal; \$45,000 State)

This grant will support the removal of the High Street Dam and replace the undersized High Street Bridge in Bridgewater, MA. The proposed work will strengthen the resilience of this community to the impacts of climate change by addressing aging infrastructure, protecting public utilities, and reducing area flooding. The project will reconnect 10 miles of river for diadromous fish, improve access to 354 acres of spawning and rearing habitats, and improve water quality. DER is supporting project design in part with a sub-grant of \$25,000 in funding from the DOI, USFWS/ Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

“I am extremely grateful to the Baker-Polito Administration for these generous grants to support ecological restoration efforts in the Plymouth and Barnstable District,” **said State Senator Vinny deMacedo (R-Plymouth)**. “The Jones River, Coonamessett River, and the Foothills Preserve are important historical and natural resources to their communities. These waterways and wetlands nourished the initial growth of our communities, and with the Administration’s continued partnership they will flourish to be enjoyed and appreciated for generations to come.”

“I am pleased with our state and federal partners continued commitment to the Coonamessett River Restoration Project,” **said State Representative David T. Vieira (R-East Falmouth)**. “Today’s funding announcement will go a long way to ensure river flow

and fish passage under public roadways and allow expanded public access to this historic and natural resource.”

“The Cape used to be home to millions of herring that would swim upstream every spring to spawn. Over the years, man-made dams and construction choked off these critical habitats leading to a precipitous decline in fish stocks,” **said State Representative Dylan Fernandes (D- Falmouth)**. “The Coonamessett River project restores this critical habitat and will give new life to the river and all of the wildlife that depends on it.”

“The Great Marsh as an estuary and habitat is one of the most significant natural resources on the Eastern seaboard and we are giving extensive new knowledge and appreciation about its importance in climate change and building resilience,” **said Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester)**. “Local experts are heading leading our country in developing a useful understanding of marshland ecosystems, and this financial support will aid in the continuing efforts to protect the marsh from erosion and other threats.”

“I am pleased that the Baker-Polito Administration and the Department of Fish and Game are supporting efforts by the Trustees of Reservations and local communities to restore the Great Marsh, which is such an important natural resource in our region,” **said State Representative Brad Hill (R-Ipswich)**. “The Priority Project grant program is very helpful in our efforts to adapt to climate change and improve habitat for fish and wildlife.”

Governor Baker filed the [**Resilient MA legislation**](#)

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to support municipalities and help protect Massachusetts residents, communities, economy, natural resources and infrastructure from the adverse effects of climate change, through an increase in the excise on real estate transfers to fund a substantial and sustained investment in climate change adaptation through programs like MVP. The revenue would be directed towards investments in resilient infrastructure to help make communities safer, keep vital services online, reduce the long-term costs of climate-related risks and protect the value of property across the Commonwealth. The proposal is estimated to generate \$1.3 billion over 10 years which would be deposited into the Commonwealth’s Global Warming Solutions Trust Fund to support municipalities and

regional municipal partnerships through loans, grants and technical assistance to implement priority adaptation projects.

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DER restores and protects rivers, wetlands, and watersheds in Massachusetts for the benefit of people and the environment.

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